A HANDFUL OF LYRICS.

From The Youth's Companion.

EPICS AND LYRICS.

I would be the Lyric
Ever on the lip,
Rather than the Epic
Memory lets slip!
I would be the diamond
At my lady's ear,
Rather than the June-rose
Worn but once a year!

MYRTILLA.

In the manner of A. D. 1700.

This is the difference, neither more nor less,
Between Medusa's and Myrtilla's face;
The former slays us with its awfulness,
The latter with its grace.

ON HER BLUSHING.

Now the red rose wins upon her cheek;
Now white with crimson closes
In desperate struggle—so to speak,
A War of Roses.

INTAGLIOS.

By the chance turning of a spade
In Roman earth, to view are laid
Bits of carnelian, bronze and gold,
Laboriously carved of old—
Sleek Bacchus with his leaves and grapes;
Bow-bending Centaurs; Gorgon shapes;
Pallas Athenè helmeted;
Some grim, forgotten emperor's head. . .
This one, most precious for its make,
That other, for the metal's sake.

A touch—and lo! are brought to light
Fancies long buried out of sight
In hearts of poets . . . bits of rhyme
Fashioned in some forgotten time
And thrown aside, but, found to-day,
Have each a value in its way—
This, for the skill with which 'tis wrought,
That, for the pathos of its thought!

THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH.

AN AMBITIOUS WOMAN.

A NOVEL.

BY EDGAR FAWCETT,

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I.

If any spot on the globe can be found where even spring has lost the sweet trick of making herself charming, a cynic in search of an opportunity for some such morose discovery might thank his baleful stars were chance to drift him upon Greenpoint. Whoever named the place in past days must have done so with a double satire; for Greenpoint is not a point, nor is it ever green. Years ago it began by being the sluggish suburb of a thriftier and smarter suburb, Brooklyn. By degrees the latter broadened into a huge city, and soon its neighbor village stretched out to it arms of straggling huts and swampy river-line, in doleful welcome. To-day the affiliation is complete. Man has said let it all be Brooklyn, and it is all Brooklyn. But the sovereign dreariness of Greenpoint, like an unpropitiated god, still remains. Its melancholy, its ugliness, its torpor, its neglect, all preserve an unimpaired novelty. It is very near New-York, and yet in atmosphere, suggestion, vitality, it is leagues away. Our noble city, with its magnificent maritime approaches, its mast-thronged docks, its lordly encircling rivers, its majesty of traffic, its gallant avenues of edifices, its loud assertion of life, and its fine promise of riper culture, fades into a dim memory when you have touched, after only a brief voyage, upon this forlorn opposite shore.

No Charon rows you across, though your short trip has too often the most funereal associations. You take passage in a squat little steamboat at either of two eastern ferries, and are lucky if a hearse with its satellite coaches should fail to embark in your company; for, curiously, the one enlivening fact associable with Greenpoint is its close nearness to a famed Roman Catholic cemetery. It is doubtful if the unkempt child wading in the muddy gutter ever turns its frowzy head when these dismal retinues stream past him. They are always streaming past him; they are as much a part of this lazy environ as the big, ghostly geese that saunter across its ill-tended cobblestones, the dirty goats that nibble at the placards on its many dingy fences, or the dull-faced Germans that plod its semi-paven streets. Death, that is always so bitter a commonplace, has here become a glaring triteness. Watched, along the main thoroughfare, from porches of liquor-shops and windows of tenement-houses, death has perhaps gained a sombre popularity with not a few shabby gazers. It rides in state, at a dignified pace; it has followers, too, riding deferentially behind it. Sometimes it has martial music, and the pomp of military escort. Life seldom has any of this, in Greenpoint. It cannot ride, or rarely. It must walk, and strain to keep its strength even for that. One part of it drudges with the needle, fumes over the smoky stove, sighs at the unappeasable baby; another part takes by dawn the little dwarfish ferry-boat and hies to the great metropolis across the river, returning jaded from labor by nightfall. No wonder, here, if death should seem to possess not merely a mournful importance but a gloomy advantage as well, or if for these toilful townsfolk philosophy had reserved itself, and instead of the paths of glory leading to the grave, it should look as if the grave were forever leading to some sort of peculiar and comfortable glory.

But Greenpoint, like a hardened conscience, still has her repentant surprises. She is not quite a thing of sloth and penury. True, the broad street that leads from steamboat to cemetery is lined with squalid homes, and the mourners who are so incessantly borne along to Calvary must see little else than beer-sellers standing slippered and coatless beside their doorways, or thin, pinched women haggling with the venders of sickly groceries. But elsewhere one may find by streets lined with low wooden dwellings that hint of neatness and suggest a better grade of living. A yellowish drab prevails as the hue of these houses; they seem all to partake of one period, like certain homogeneous fossils. But they do not breathe of antiquity; they are fanciful with trellised piazzas and other modern embellishments of carpentry; sometimes they possess miniature Corinthian pillars, faded by the trickle of rain between their tawny flutings, as if stirred with the dumb desire to be white and classic. Scant gardens front them, edged with a few yards of ornamental fence. Their high basement windows stare at you from a foundation of brick. They are very prosaic, chiefly from their lame effort to be picturesque; and when you look down toward the river, expecting to feel refreshed by its gleam, you are disheartened at the way in which lumber yards and sloop-wharves have quite shut any glimpse of it from your eyes.

In one of these two-storied wooden houses, not many years ago, dwelt a family of three people, a Mr. Francis Twining, his wife, and their only child, a girl, named Claire. Mr. Twining was an Englishman by birth; thirty years had passed since he first landed on these shores. He had come here nearly penniless, but with proud hopes. He was then only three-and-twenty. He had sprung from a good country family, had been fitted at Eton for Oxford, and had seen one year at the famed University. Then sharp financial disaster had overtaken his father, whose death soon followed. Francis was a younger son, but even to the heir had fallen a shattered patrimony, and to himself merely a slender legacy. With this, confident and undaunted as though it were the purse of Fortunio, Francis had taken voyage for New-York. At first he had shown a really splendid energy. Slim of figure, with a pale, womanish face, lit by large, soft blue eyes, he gave slight physical sign of force or even will. But though possessed of both, he proved one of those ill-fated beings whom failure never tires of rebuffing. His mental ability was unquestioned; he shrank with sensitive disgust from all vice; he had plenty of ambition, and the instinct of solid industry. Yet, as years passed on, both secured him but meagre recompense for struggle. He had begun his career with a clerkship; now, at fifty-three, he was a clerk still. All his hope had fled, he had undergone bitter heart-burnings; he had striven to solve the problem of his own defeat. Meanwhile its explanation was not difficult. He had a boyish trust in his fellow-creatures that no amount of stern experience seemed to weaken. Chicanery had made him its sport. Five separate times he had been swindled mercilessly by men in whom he had reposed implicit faith. There had lain his rock of ruin: he was always reposing implicit faith in everybody. His life had been one long pathos of over-credulity. He could think, reason, reflect, analyze, but he was incapable of doubting. A fool could have deceived him, and naturally, on repeated occasions, knaves had not found it difficult. At fifty-three his last hard-earned savings had been wormed from him by the last plausible scamp. And now he had accepted himself as the favorite of misfortune: over the glow of his spirit disappointment had cast its dulling spell, like the deep film of ash that sheathes a spent ember. He had now one aim—to keep his wife and child from indigence while he lived, and one despair—that he could not keep them from indigence after he was dead. But his really lovely optimism still remained. He had been essentially amiable and complaisant in all intercourse with his kind, and this quality had not lost a ray of its fine former lustre. With ample excuse for the worst cynic feeling, he continued a gentle yet unconscious philanthropist. There was something piteously sweet in the obstinacy with which he still saw only the bright side of humanity. His delicate person had grown more slim; his rusty clothes hung about him with a mournful looseness; his oval face, worn by worriment, had taken keener lines; but his large blue eyes still kept their liquid sparkle and kindled in prompt unison with his alert smile. The flaxen growth that had always fringed his lips and chin with cloudy lightness, had now become of a frosty gray. Seen passingly, no one would have called him, as the current phrase goes, a gentleman. His wearied mien forbade the suggestion of leisure, while his broadcloth spoke of long wear and speedy purchase. But a close gaze might have caught the unperished refinement that still clung to him with sad persistence, and was evident in such minor effects of personal detail as a glimpse of cleanly linen about throat and wrist, a cheap yet careful lustre of the often jaded boot, a culture and purity of the hand, or even a choice nicety of the finger nail.

He had married after reaching these shores, and his marriage had proved another test of misplaced confidence. His wife had been handsome when a young woman, and she had become Mrs. Twining at about the age of five-and-twenty. She was personally quite the opposite of her bridegroom; she was an inch taller than he, and had an aquiline face, splendid with a pair of very black eyes that she had rolled and flashed at the other sex since early girlhood. She had rolled and flashed them at her present husband, and so conquered him. She was a good inch taller than he, and lapse of time had not diminished the difference since their union. She had been extremely vulgar, as Miss Jane Wray, when Twining had married her, and she was extremely vulgar still. She had first met him in a boarding-house in East Broadway, where Twining had secured a room on his arrival from England. At this period East Broadway wore only a waning grace of gentility; some few conservative nabobs still lingered there, obstinately defying plebeian inroads. Its roomy brick mansions, with their arched, antique doorways, devoid of any vestibule, their prim-railed stoops that guessed not of ornate balusters, and their many-paned, thin-sashed windows where plate-glass had never glittered, were already invaded by inmates whose Teuton names and convex noses prophesied the social decline that must soon grasp this once select purlieu. Jane Wray was neither German nor Hebrew; she was American in the least pleasant sense of that word, both as regards parentage and breeding. She was an orphan, and the recipient of surly charity from unprosperous relatives. She wanted very greatly to marry, and Twining had seemed to her a golden chance. There was much about her from which he shrank; but she contrived to rouse his pity, and then to lure from him a promise which he would have despised himself not to keep.

The succeeding years had brought bitter mutual disappointments. Mrs. Twining had believed firmly in her husband's powers to sound the horn of luck and slay the giant of adversity. But he had done neither, and it now looked as if his bones were one day to bleach along the roadway to success. She became an austere grumbler, forever pricking her sweet-tempered lord with a tireless little bodkin of reproach. Her vulgarities had sharpened; her wit, always cruel and acute, had tipped itself with a harsher venom and fledged itself with a swifter feather; her bright, coarse beauty had dimmed and soured; she was at present a gaunt elderly female with square shoulders and hard dark eyes, who flung sarcasms broadcast with a baleful liberality, and seemed forever standing toward her own destiny in the attitude of a person who has some large unsettled claim against a nefarious government.

Claire Twining, the one child who had been born of this ill-assorted marriage, was now nineteen years old. She bore a striking likeness to her father; she possessed his blue eyes, a trifle darker in shade, his broad white forehead, his sloping delicacy of visage, and his erect though slender frame. From him, too, had come the sunny quality of her smile, the gold tints in her chestnut hair, the fine symmetry of hands and feet. Rather from association than heredity she had caught his kindly warmth of manner; but in Claire the cordial impulse was far less spontaneous; she had her black list of dislikes, and she took people on trust with wary prudence. Here spoke her mother's share in the girl's being, as it spoke also in a certain distinct chiselling of every feature, that suggested a softened memento of Miss Jane Wray's girlish countenance, though Claire's coloring no more resembled her mother's of past time than wild-rose is like peony, or pastel like chromo. But there was one more maternal imprint set deep within this girl's nature, not to be thinned or marred by any stress of events, and productive of a trait whose development for good or ill is the chief cause that her life has here been chronicled. The birthright was a perilous one; it was a heritage of discontent; its tendency was perpetual longing for better environment, for ampler share in the world's good gifts, for higher place in its esteem and stronger claim to its heed. But what in her mother had been ambition almost as crudely eager as a boorish elbow-thrust, was in Claire more decorous and interesting, like the push of a fragile yet determined hand through a sullen crowd. In both cases the dissatisfaction was something that is peculiar to the woman of our land and time—a desire not to try and adorn the sphere in which she is born, but to try and reach a new sphere held as more suited for her own adornment. Yet Claire's restless yearning lacked the homely grossness of her mother's; it reflected a finer flash; it was not all cut from one piece; it had its subtlety, its enthusiasm, even its justification. It was not a mere stubborn hunger for advancement; it was (in this early stage, at least) a wish to gain advancement by the passport of proper worthiness. She did not want the air to lift her away from hated surroundings, but she wanted wings that would turn the air her willing ally. It was what her father had made her that touched what her mother had made her with a truly poetic tenderness. By only a little prouder curve of the neck and a little happier fulness of the plume, we part the statuesque swan from considerably more commonplace kindred. Something like this delightful benison of difference had fallen upon Claire.

II.

Circumstances, too, had fed the potency of this difference. Claire had not been reared like her mother. When she was nine years old her parents were living in a tiny brick house near the East River, among New-York suburbs. But Claire had been sent to a small school nearby, kept by a dim, worn lady, with an opulent past and a most precarious present. She had studied for three years under this lady's capable care, and had lost nothing by the opportunity. Her swift, apt mind had delighted her instructress, whose name was Mrs. Carmichael. Claire was remarkably receptive; she had acquired without seeming effort. Mrs. Carmichael was one of the many ladies who attempt the education of youth without either system or equipment for so serious a task. Her slight body, doubtless attenuated by recurring memories of a cherished past, would sometimes invisibly quake before Claire's precocious questionings. She knew all that she knew superficially, and she soon became fearful lest Claire should pierce, by a sort of adroit ignorance, her veneer of academic sham. She had a narrow little peaked face, of a prevailing pink hue, as though it were being always bathed in some kind of sunset light, like the rosy afterglow of her own perished respectability. Her nervous, alert head was set on a pair of sloping shoulders, and she wore its sparse tresses shaped into roulades and bandeaus which had an amateurish look, and seemed to imitate the deft handiwork of some long-departed tirewoman. She carried her small frame with erect importance. She was always referring to vanished friendships with this or that notability, but time and place were so ignored in these volunteered reminiscences as to make her allusions acquire a tender mythic grandeur. Claire had watched well her teacher's real and native elegance, and she had set this down as a solid fact. Perhaps the child had probed her many harmless falsities with equal skill. As for Mrs. Carmichael, she would sometimes pat her pupil on the cheek and praise her in no weak terms. "I wish that I had only known you a long time ago, my little lady," she would say, in her serene treble voice. "I would have brought you up as my own dear child, for I never had a child of my own. I would have given you a place in the world to be proud of, and have watched with interest the growth of your fine mental abilities, surrounded by those poor lost friends of mine who would have delighted in so clever a girl as you are."

"When you speak of your friends as lost, Mrs Carmichael," Claire had once replied, "do you mean that they are all dead now?"

At this question the lady slowly shook her head, with just enough emphasis not to imperil the modish architecture of her locks.

"Some of them are dead, my dear," she murmured, with the least droop of each pink eyelid, "but the rest are much too grand for me at present. They have quite forgotten me." Here Mrs. Carmichael gave a quick, fluttered cough, and then touched the tips of her close-pressed fingers to the edges of her close-pressed lips.

Claire privately thought them very churlish friends to have forgotten anybody so high-bred and winsome as Mrs. Carmichael. And she publicly expressed this thought at supper the same evening, while she sat with her parents in a small lower room opening directly off the kitchen. A weary maid, whose face flamed from the meal she had just cooked, was patiently serving it. Mrs. Twining, who had lent no light hand toward the Monday's washing, was in the act of distributing a somewhat meagre beefsteak, which fate and an incompetent range had conspired to cover on both sides with a layer of thick, sooty black. Mr. Twining was waiting to get a piece of the beefsteak; he did not yet know of its disastrous condition, for a large set of pewter casters reared its uncouth pyramid between himself and the maltreated viand; but although such calamities of cookery were not rare to his board, he was putting confidence, as usual, in the favors of fortune, and preparing himself blandly for a fresh little stroke of chagrin.

Outside it was midwinter dusk, and a bleak wind was blowing from the ice-choked river, pale and dull under the sharp stars. One-hundred-and-twelfth-st. was in those years a much wilder spot than now; its buildings, like its flag-stones, were capricious incidents; its boon of the elevated railroad was yet undreamed of by capitalists; you rode to it in languid horse-cars from the remote centres of commerce, upward past parapets of virgin rock where perched the hut of the squatter, or wastes of houseless highway where even the aspiring tavern had not dared to pioneer. Mr. Twining had just ridden hither by this laggard means, and he was tired and hungry; he wanted his supper, a little valued chat with his beloved Claire, and a caress or two from the child as well. After these he wanted a few hours of rest before to-morrow redawned, with its hum-drum austerities. One other thing he desired, and this was a blessing more often desired than attained. He had the wish for a peaceful domestic interval, as regarded his wife's deportment, between home-coming and departure.

But to-night it had been otherwise decreed. Mrs. Twining's faint spark of innate warmth was never roused by the contact of suds. Monday was her day of wrath; you might almost have fancied that she had used a bit of her superfluous soap in vainly trying to rub the rust from her already tarnished hopes.

The small room where the trio sat was void of any real cheer. A pigmy stove, at one side of it, stood fuel-choked and nearly florid in hue. From this a strong volume of heat engulfed Mrs. Twining in its oppressive spell, but lost vigor before it reached her husband or Claire, and left the corners of the apartment so frigid that a gaunt sofa, off where the light of the big oil lamp could only vaguely touch it, took upon its slippery hair-cloth surface the easy semblance of ice. Two windows, not fashioned to thwart the unwonted bitterness of the weather, were draped with nothing more resistant than a pair of canvas shades, gorgeously pictorial in the full light of day, when seen by the passer who seldom passed. These shades were of similar designs; in justice to Mrs. Twining it must be told that they had been rented with the house. On each a plumed gentleman in a gondola held fond converse with a dishevelled lady in a balcony. The conception was no less Venetian in meaning than vicious in execution; but to-night, for any observant wayfarer, such presentments of sunny Italy, while viewed between blotches of wan frost that crusted the intervening panes, must have appeared doubly counterfeit. Still, the chief discomfort of the chamber, just at present, was a layer of brooding cold that lay along its floor, doggedly inexterminable, and the sole approach to regularity of temperature that its four walls contained.

It had made Claire gather up her feet toward the top rung of her chair, and shiver once or twice, but it had not chilled the pretty gayety of her childish talk, all of which had thus far been addressed to her father.

"And so you like Mrs. Carmichael, my dear?" Twining had said in his smooth, cheerful voice. "Well, I am glad of that."

"Oh, yes, I like her," replied Claire, with a slight, wise nod of her head, where the clear gold of youth had not yet given way to the brown-gold of maidenhood. "But I think it strange that all her fine friends have dropped off from her. That's what she told me to-day, father; truly, she did! Why don't they care for her any more? Is it because she's poor and has to teach little dunces like me?"

Twining's feminine blue eyes scanned the rather dingy tablecloth for a moment. "I am afraid it is," he said, in a low voice, pressing between his fingers a bit of ill-baked bread that grew doughy at a touch.

Mrs. Twining ceased to carve the obdurate beefsteak, though still retaining her hold on the horn-handled knife and fork. She lifted her head so that it quite towered above the formidable group of casters, and looked straight at her husband.

"Don't put false notions into the child, Francis," she said, each word seeming to strike the next with a steely click. "You're always doing it. *You* know nothing of where that woman came from, or who she is."

Twining looked at his wife. His gaze was very mild. "I only know what she has told me, Jane," he said.

Mrs. Twining laughed and resumed the carving. Her laugh never went with a smile; it never had the least concern with mirth; it was nearly always a presage of irony, as an east wind will blow news of storm.

"Oh, certainly; what she's told you! That's you, all over! Suppose she'd told you she'd been Lady of the White House once. You wouldn't have believed her, not you! Of course not!"

"What is a Lady of the White House?" asked Claire, appealing to her father. She was perfectly accustomed to these satiric outbursts on her mother's part; they belonged to the home circle; she would have missed them if they had ceased; it would have been like a removal of the hair-cloth sofa, or an accident to one of the lovers on the window shades.

Twining disregarded this simple question, which was a rare act with him; he usually heard and heeded whatever Claire had to say.

"Please don't speak hard things of Mrs. Carmichael," he answered his wife. "She's really a person who has seen better days."

"Better days!" echoed Mrs. Twining. "Well, then, we ought to shake hands. *I* think she's just *the* plainest humbug I ever saw, with her continual brag about altered circumstances. But I'll take your word for it, Francis. The next time I see her I'll tell her we're fellow-unfortunates. We'll compare our 'better days' together, and calc'late who's seen the most."

Twining gave a faint sigh, and looked down. Then he raised his eyes again, and a new spark lit their mildness. Something to-night had made him lack his old patient tolerance.

"I'm afraid Mrs. Carmichael would have much the longer list," he said.

"Oh, you think so!"

"I know so."

Mrs. Twining tossed her head. The gloss was still on her dark hair, whose gray threads had yet to come, later, in the Greenpoint days. She was still, as the phrase goes, a fine figure of a woman. Her black eyes had not lost their fire, nor her form its imposing fulness. She raised herself a little from her chair, as she now spoke, and in her voice there was the harshness that well fitted her bristling, aggressive mien.

"Oh! you *know* so, do you?" she said, in hostile undertone. Then her next words were considerably louder. "But *I* happen to know, Francis Twining, *Esquire*, who and what *I* was when you took me from a comfortable home to land me up here at the end of the world, where I'm lucky if I can get hold of yesterday's newspaper to-morrow, and cross over to the cars without leaving a shoe behind me in the mud!"

The least flush had tinged Twining's pale cheeks. He had looked very steadily at his wife all through this speech. And when he now spoke, his voice made Claire start. It did not seem his.

"You were a poor girl in a third-rate boarding-house when I married you," he said. "And the boarding-house was kept by relatives who disliked and wanted to be rid of you. I don't see how you have fallen one degree lower since you became my wife. But if you think that you have so fallen, I beg that you will not forever taunt me with idle sneers, of which I am sick to the soul!"

Mrs. Twining rose from her chair. Her dress was of some dark-red stuff, and as the stronger light struck its woof the wrath of her knit brows seemed to gain a lurid augment. She had grown pale, and a little mole, just an inch or so to the left of her assertive nose, had got a new clearness from this cause. She did not speak, at first, to her husband. She addressed the fatigued and heated maid, who waited to hand Twining his share of the doleful beefsteak—in this case a true burnt offering.

"You can go into the kitchen, Mary Ann," she said, with tones that had a kind of rumble, like the beginning of a large thunder-peal, before its threat has become fury. "See to the range, you know. Dump all the coal out, and then sift it."

Mary Ann went uneasily toward the door. She understood that this order thinly masked a command for her absence. Mrs. Twining slowly turned her head, and followed the poor factotum with her kindled black eyes till she had quitted the room. Then she looked with stern directness at her husband.

"I've stood a good deal from you," she said, pitching her voice in a much shriller key, "but I ain't going to stand *this*, Francis Twining, and it's time I told you so."

Twining rose. He did not look at all angry. There was a weary distress on his face, mixed with an unhabitual firmness.

"What have you stood?" he asked.

"Being brow-beat by you, sir, because I see fit to talk out my mind, and ain't the weak-spirited goose you'd like to have me!" retorted Mrs. Twining, all rage and outcry.

"I don't want a quarrel," said Twining, calm as marble. "God knows I don't, Jane! But the time has come for me to speak plainly. I have never brow-beaten you. It has been quite the opposite. I have already borne too much from you for the sake of peace. But no peace springs from that course. So now I mean to try another. You and I must live apart, since we can't agree." He turned to Claire, at this point, and reached out one hand, resting it on the girl's head. "Let our child choose which of us she will go with," he added.

Claire started up, sprang to her father's side, and nestled herself against him, catching one of his hands in both her own and drawing his arm about her neck. She was trembling with what seemed sudden fear as she looked up into his face.

"Father," she cried, "I'll go with *you!* I couldn't live alone with mother. If *you* go, take me with you! Promise—please promise! Mother isn't good to me a bit. I couldn't live alone with her. She is cross nearly all the time, when you're not here, and she struck me yesterday, and she often does it, and I didn't ever tell you before, because I knew it would trouble you so to know!"

These words were spoken in a high, pleading, plaintive voice. The child's sad little secret had been wrung from her by sheer terror of desertion. There was no accusative resentment in her tones; she might have gone on for a long time hiding the truth; it had leapt to her lips now only in the shape of an impetuous argument against the dreaded chance of being left behind, should her father's menace of departure become fact. Mrs. Twining moved from her own side of the table to where her husband and daughter stood. She looked persistently at Claire during this action, and had soon drawn very close to her.

"You sly young vixen!" she exclaimed. Her cry had a husky note, and she raised one hand. It was plain that she meant wicked work to Claire. Twining pushed Claire behind him, quick as thought, and seized his wife's hand while it fell. He had grown white to the lips. His clasp was not weak about the wrist which he still retained. He did not appear at all like a man in a passion, but rather like one filled with the resolve which gets new sinew from excitement. "You shall never strike that child again," Then he released his wife's wrist, and half turned, putting his arms round Claire, while she again nestled at his side. "I will do all I can for you," he went on, "but neither she nor I shall live with you after to-morrow. It was bad enough to have you make things hard for me, but you shan't spoil her with your own coarseness." The next moment he turned to Claire, wrapped her still more fervently in both arms, and kissed her twice or thrice on the uplifted forehead.

Mrs. Twining stood quite still, for a short while. She was watching her husband intently. Something new in him had revealed itself to her; it blunted the edge of her anger; she was unprepared for it. Personal defiance in Twining might merely have quickened her own long-petted sense of grievance, which had grown morbidly dear, as we know. But a fresh experience fronted her; she found herself repelled, so to speak, by the revolt of an insulted fatherhood.

It was a very serious rebellion, and she felt its force. Past concessions from her husband gave the measure of his present mutiny. He had never been humble to her, but he had yielded, and she had grown more used than she realized to his pliant complaisance. This abrupt change shocked her with an actual fright. Her ready little body-guard of taunts and innuendoes fled her usual summons. The despot stood deserted; not a janizary was left. She saw, in quick, startled perspective, her own future, uncompanioned by the man whose supporting nearness her bitter gibes had so often slighted. But apart from merely selfish causes, a thrill of human regard for her child and the father of her child lent fresh accent to alarm. It was like the tremor wrought in a slack harp-string, or one rusty with disuse, but it was still a definite vibration.

She succumbed awkwardly, like most overthrown tyrants. Tears would have looked incongruous had they left the chill black of her eyes, just as there are climes of so fixed a rigor that thaws rank in them as phenomena. But her brows met in a perplexed frown that had no trace of ire, and she made a flurried upward gesture with both hands, receding several steps. When she spoke, which she promptly did, her native idiom forgot even the slight garb of change that marriage and nicer association had lent it, and stood forth, stripped by agitation, in graceless nudity.

"Mercy me, Francis!" she exclaimed, "you ain't talking as if you was a sane man at all! You'll quit your lawful wife, sir, 'cause she's boxed her own young one's ears? Why, that child can put on the airs of any six when she's a mind to. I ain't punished her half enough. Do set down and eat your supper, and stop bein' a fool!"

These chronicled words have the effect of rather bald commonplace, it is true; but to the man and the child who heard them an apprehensive whimper, a timorous dilation of the eyeball and a flurried quiver about the severe mouth were accompaniments that held piercing significance. Such tokens from their domestic autocrat meant surrender, and surrender was hard for both Twining and Claire to join with past impressions of rule and sway, of command and observance, from the very source which now gave forth their direct opposites.

Both father and daughter still remained silent. Claire's head was still nestling against his breast; Twining's arms still clasped her slight frame, as before. Neither spoke. But Mrs. Twining soon spoke again, and she moved toward the door as she did so.

"Oh, you won't set down, eh?" she inquired; and there was now a sullen fright both in her manner and tone. "Very well. P'raps you'll eat your supper when I'm gone. I've always heard crazy people must be humored. Besides, 't isn't safe, with so many knives and forks 'round."

After that she left the room, going upstairs into the little hall above the basement, where she could have seen her breath freeze if economic reasons had not kept the lank, pendant gas-burner still unlighted.

She had beaten a positive retreat. Her exit had been a distinct concession. Twining turned his gaze toward the vacant threshold after she had passed it, as if he could not just realize the unwonted humility of her leave-taking.

"Claire," he said, again kissing the child, while she yet clung *to* him, "you should have told me before that your mother struck you. You should have told me the first time she did it." He embraced her still more closely. Since she was a baby he had always treasured her, and now that defeat and disappointment dealt him such persistent strokes, his love grew deeper with each disastrous year. Claire's presence in his life had gained a precious worth from trouble; it was the star that brightened with sweeter force against a deepening gloom.

He leaned down and slowly passed his lips along her silky hair, just where its folds flowed off from one pale temple. "Oh, my little girl," he said, in a voice whose volume and feeling had both plainly strengthened, "I hope that happy days are in store for you! I shall do my best, darling, but if I fail don't blame me. Don't blame me!"

He appeared no longer to be addressing Claire. He had lifted his head. Both his arms engirt her as previously, but his eyes, looking straight before him, were sombre with meditation.

Claire gazed up into his face. "Father," she cried, "I shall be happy if I am always with you! Don't look like that. Please don't. What does it mean? I have never seen you so sad before. It frightens me. Father—you are so strange and different." He smiled down at the child as her high, pained appeal ended; but the smile soon fled again; a gloomy agitation replaced it. She felt his clasping arms tremble.

"You cannot always have me," he answered. "I love you very much, my little one, but some day I must leave you; my time will have come, and it may come while your life is yet in its first flower. Then I want you to be wiser than I. Listen to what I say. I am in a dark humor now, but it will soon pass, for I can't help being cheerful, as you know; there's a good deal more sun than shadow in me. But just now I am all shadow. I feel as if I should never be successful, Claire. That is a queer word to your young ears. Do you recollect, when I took you for that one day to the country, last summer, how we set out to climb the large hill, and were sure, at starting, that we should reach its top? But half-way up we grew tired and hot; there was no breeze, and the way was rough; so we sat down, didn't we, and rested, and then went home? you have not forgotten? Well, success means to do what you set out for, darling. It means to climb the hill—not to get tired and go home. That is what everybody is trying to do. But only a few of us ever reach the top. And to reach the top means to have many good things—to be like the grand people who were once Mrs. Carmichael's friends. Do you understand, Claire?"

"Yes," said the child. Her lips were parted. A gloom had clouded the blue of her eyes; they seemed almost black, and two unwonted gleams pierced them. She was alarmed yet fascinated by the real sorrow in her father's look, and by his unfamiliar speech, with its fervent speed and bitter ring.

"I shall never gain the top of the hill, Claire!" Twining went on. "Something tells me so now—to-night. To-morrow I shall be changed. I shall turn hopeful again. I shall go climbing along, and pick myself up stoutly if I stumble. But remember what I tell you to-night. In my heart, little girl, there is a great fear. I am afraid I must leave you, when I do die, poor and helpless. We are always helpless when we are poor. But you must not lose courage. There is one thing a girl can always do if she has beauty and wit, and you will have both. She can marry. In the years of life left to me, I shall strain hard to make you a lady. I am a gentleman. My father, and his father, and his father, too, were all gentlemen. It is in your blood to be a lady, and a lady you shall be. But your mother"—— Here he paused. Even his raw sense of wrong, and the precipitate reasoning native to all passion, forbade his completing the last sentence.

"I know what you mean, father," said Claire, who had not lost the significance of a word, and whose mind would have grasped subtler discourse than the present. She spoke falteringly, and turned her eyes toward the deserted table; and then, with her shaken, tragic little voice, she lapsed into the prose of things, slipping over that edge between the emotional and the ordinary whose unwilling junction makes the clash that we like to call comedy.

"Father," she said, "please sit down and eat your supper. It's getting cold. Please do!"

This is not at all an index of Claire's thoughts, for they were then in a storm of dread and misgiving; but she shrank from the changed aspect of one known and loved in moods widely different. She seized, as if by a fond instinct, the most ready means of re-securing her father as she had first found him and had always afterward prized him.

But her attempt was vain. Twining's arms only tightened about her frail form. Like all with whom outburst is rare, his perturbation worked toward a climax; it would brook no repression. There are craters that keep the peace for many decades, but in spite of that their stored lava will not be cheated of the eruptive chance.

So it was with Twining. He trembled more than ever, and his cheeks were now quite hueless. "I want you to do all that I shall leave undone, Claire!" he exclaimed, with voluble swiftness. "I want you to conquer a high place among men and women. Be cool and wary, my daughter. Don't live to serve self only, but push your claims, enforce your rights, refuse to be thrust back, never make false steps, put faith in the few and doubt the many. Remember what I am saying. You will need to recall it, for you must start (God help you, little one!) with all the world against you: Yes, all the world against you . ."

A sudden gasp ended Twining's words. His embrace of Claire relaxed, and he staggered toward the sofa, which was just behind him. As he sank upon it, his eyes closed and his head fell sideways. One hand fluttered about his throat, and he seemed in straits for breath. Claire was greatly terrified. She thought that to be death which was merely a transient pause of vitality. The rough gust will bow the frailer tree, and Twining, weary in mind and body, had made too abrupt draughts upon a temperament far from robust.

The child uttered a piercing cry. It summoned the proscribed Mary Ann from exile in the neighboring kitchen; it was heard and heeded by Mrs. Twining, aloof in some remoter chamber. Yet, before either had reached the scene of Claire's distress, her father had already pressed the warm quietude, her father had already pressed the warm hand which sought his cold one, and had looked at her with a gaze that wore the glow of recognition.

"Claire," he soon said, brokenly, and with [illegible] utterance, "I—I was unwell for a moment—[illegible] all. Here, little girl, kiss me, and then give me a glass of water."

"Yes, Father," said Claire. Her response showed a joyous relief. She knelt beside him, and put her lips to his. It was like the good-night kiss she always gave him, except that she made it longer than of old. And then she rose to get the glass of water, hearing footsteps approach.

As she poured the liquid, with unsteady fingers, a partial echo of her father's impetuous enjoinder swept through her mind. "I shall never forget this night," she told herself. Her silent prophecy proved true. She never did forget.

III.

Twining's menace was not carried out. There was no actual reconciliation between husband and wife, and yet matters slowly rearranged themselves. The domestic machinery, being again set moving, went at first in a lame, spasmodic way, as though jarred and strained through all its wheelwork. But by degrees the old order of things returned. And yet a marked change, in one respect at least, was always afterward evident. Mrs Twining had received a clear admonition, and she was discreet enough permanently to regard it. She still dealt in her former slurs and innuendoes; the leopard could not change its spots; no such radical reformation was naturally to be expected. But Twining had put forth his protest; he had shown very plainly that his endurance had its limits, and through all the years that followed, his wife never lost sight of this vivid little fact. She had been seriously frightened, and the fright left its vibration of warning as long as she and her husband dwelt under the same roof. Her sting had by no means been extracted, but its point was blunter and its poison less irritant. She never again struck Claire. She was sometimes very imperious to her daughter, and very acrimonious as well. But in her conduct there was now a sombre acknowledgment of curtailed authority—an undercurrent of concession, occasionally rather faint, it is true, and yet always operative.

During the next year the family deserted One-hundred-and-twelfth-st., for a new place of abode. Twining received a few extra hundreds as earnest of shadowy thousands promised him by a glib-tongued rogue who was to appal the medical world with a wondrous compound that must soon rob half the diseases known to pathology of their last terrors. The elixir was to be "placed handsomely on the market," and toward this elegant enterprise poor Twining gave serious aid. For the lump of savings that went from him, however, he was paid only a tithe of his rash investment. One day he learned that the humane chemist had fled from the scene of his proposed benignities, and a little later came the drear discovery that his miraculous potion was merely an unskilful blending of two or three common specifics with as many popular nervines.

Meanwhile the halcyon promise of bettered fortunes had induced Twining to secure easier quarters. For several months he set his household gods within apartments on the second-floor of a shapely brown-stone residence in a central side-street. This was really a decisive move toward greater social importance. The very tone of his upholstery bespoke a distinct rise in life. There was not a hair-cloth sofa in his pretty suite of chambers. The furniture was tufted and modish; one or two glowing grates replaced the dark awkwardness of stoves; draughts were an abolished evil; to sup on burnt beefsteak had grown a shunned memory, since the family now dined at 6 o'clock each evening in a lower room, where they had a small table all to themselves, and ate a repast served in courses, with a distinct air of fashion, if not always cooked after the loftier methods. Here they met other groups at other small tables, and bowed to them with the bland nod of co-sharers in worldly comfort. It was all a most noteworthy change for the Twinings, and its effect upon Mrs. Twining was no less obvious than acute. She seemed to clutch the new favors of fate with a mingled greed and distrust. She was like one who crushes thirstily between his lips a luscious fruit, won by theft, and thought to be watched with the intent of quick seizure.

She had already quite lost faith in anything like the permanence of her husband's good fortune. "I'd better make hay while the sun shines," she would exclaim, with a burst of laughter that had, as usual, no touch of mirth in it. "Lord knows when it'll end. I'm sure I hope never. Don't think I'm croaking. Gracious me, no! But even the Five Points won't seem so bad, after this. They say every dog has his day, don't they, Francis? So, all right; if mine's a short day, I'll be up and doing while it lasts."

She was undoubtedly up and doing. She carried her large frame with a more assertive majesty; she aired one or two fresh gowns with a loud ostentation; she had a little quarrel with a fellow-lodger of her own sex about the prevailing fashion in bonnets, and said so many personal things during the contest that her adversary, who was a person with nerves, retired in tearful disarray. On more than one Sunday morning she induced her husband to walk with her along Fifth-ave., and "see the churches come out." At such times she would lean upon his arm, grandly indifferent to the fact that her stature overtopped his own, and stare with her severe black eyes at all the passing phases of costume. It is probable that the pair made a very grotesque picture on these occasions, since all that implied refinement in the man's face and demeanor must have acquired a fatal stamp of insignificance beside the woman's pretension of carriage and raw spruceness of apparel. But Mrs. Twining was making her hay, as she has told us, while the sun shone, and it is hardly strange that she should not be critical as to the exact quality of her crop. A good deal of rough experience in the woes of dearth and drouth had, naturally, not made her a fastidious harvester.

Claire, meanwhile, had begun to feel as if she dwelt on quite a new sort of planet. Her environment had lost every trace of its former dulness. Its neutral shades had freshened into brilliant and exciting tints. Little Mrs. Carmichael, with her hoard of memories stowed away like old brocades in a scented chest, had herself faded off into a memory as dim as these. Claire had of late become one of the pupils in a large, well-reputed school, where she met girls of all ages and characters, but seemingly of only a single social rank. The academy was superintended by a magnificent lady in chronic black corded silk, whose rich rustle was heard for a good minute before she entered each of her various class-rooms and held bits of whispered converse with the instructresses under her serene sway. Her name was Mrs. Arcularius, and its fine rhythmical polysyllable seemed to symbolize the dignity of its owner's slow walk, the majesty of her arched nose and gold eye-glasses, and the white breadth of her forehead, from which the gray tresses were rolled backward in high solidness, with quite a regal effect of hair-dressing. This lady was the direct contra-type of Mrs. Carmichael. It was widely recorded of her that she had once been a gentlewoman of independent wealth, had chanced upon adverse times, and had for this reason become the proprietress of a school. But she had made her grand friends pay the penalty of her misfortunes; she had possessed the art of using them as an advertisement of her venture at self-support. She had not gone up to One-hundred-and-twelfth-st. and mourned their loss; she had staid in Twenty-third-st, and suffered their children, little and big, to come unto her. She had at first graciously allowed herself to be pitied for her reverses, but she had always possessed the art of handing back their patronage to those who proffered it, in the wholly altered form of a gracious condescension from herself. This is a very clever thing to do; it is a thing which they alone know how to do who know how to fall from high places with a self-saving rebound; and Mrs. Arcularius, who was a decidedly ignorant woman, was also a marvellously clever one. She knew rather less, in a strictly educational sense, than poor unsuccessful Mrs. Carmichael. She had been a friend of Mrs. Carmichael's in the latter's gladsome days, but she was now not even aware that her old associate was teaching school anywhere. Everybody was aware, on the other hand, that Mrs. Arcularius was teaching school and just where she was teaching it. Poverty had crushed one; it had stimulated the other. Mrs.